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Grab them by the Nose and Kick them in the Pants:  
Patton on Combined Arms Operational Maneuver

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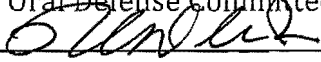
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## **Executive Summary**

Title: Grab them by the Nose and Kick them in the Pants: Patton on Combined Arms Operational Maneuver

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Thesis: Patton achieved rapid success on the battlefields of Northwest Europe by combining the firepower and flexibility of combined arms and the speed of maneuver to create combined arms operational maneuver. Combined arms operational maneuver, Patton's "American Blitzkrieg," continues to influence U.S. army doctrine today.

Discussion: As German Panzer divisions overwhelmed Polish and French defenses in late 1939 and early 1940, the world witnessed the violent birth of modern combined arms operational maneuver, Blitzkrieg. US Army doctrine at this time was based on institutional memory shaped by the trenches of World War I. General George S. Patton combined his understanding of maneuver warfare (gained from cavalry) and the firepower of modern combined arms to revolutionize American warfare in World War II. Patton would call it "Grab them by the nose and kick them in the pants." This paper examines Patton's close coordination between Third Army and XIX Tactical Air Command as he races across Europe. It demonstrates that Patton understood combined arms operational maneuver should be used to seek decisive victory and failing to do so, as happened on numerous occasions throughout the campaign, would lead to a prolonged war. Patton's combined arms operational maneuver has influenced American military doctrine as demonstrated by the "Shock and Awe" campaign in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Conclusion: Patton realized the value of maneuver warfare and added the firepower and flexibility gained from combined arms to create combined arms operational maneuver in World War II. His numerous victories across North West Europe are a testament to the effectiveness of Patton and his American "Blitz." While stopped many times across Europe, often due to his own superiors, he always sought the decisive victory needed to end World War II.

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## Acknowledgements

General George S. Patton Jr. was the right general in the right war at the right time. His experience with maneuver and combined arms gained with General Pershing in Mexico and then again in World War I would create an answer to the German Blitzkrieg in World War II. The true tragedy of the Patton story is that he was killed in a car accident shortly after the war. It was an unfortunate way for a warrior to die, yet the loss of his direct influence on post war military doctrine is even greater. Despite his early passing, Patton's combined arms operational maneuver became the cornerstone of military doctrine and is still in practice today.

The sheer volume of material on Patton required an immense effort during this paper. The two most important historians on Patton are Martin Blumenson and Carlo D'Este. Their work was invaluable in providing content and sources for further research.

I'd like to thank Dr. Paul Gelpi for providing timely and helpful leadership and advice. I'd also like to thank Dr. Douglas Streusand for his reminder to look at both sides of the story to achieve truth. Finally, I'd like to thank my wife Jerilyn, for providing much needed support during the final push to complete the paper.

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As the German Panzer divisions overwhelmed the Polish defenses in September 1939 and then quickly defeated the French in May 1940, the world witnessed the birth of modern operational maneuver warfare: blitzkrieg. "Make them keep their heads down; go through them and past them; mop up what remains," said Field Marshall Rommel.<sup>1</sup> Blitzkrieg, or operational maneuver, was the first successful integration of modern combined arms to include tanks, air, artillery, and infantry with maneuver on an operational scale to achieve a decisive victory. In less than a year, the German military had conquered Poland and France, thereby achieving significantly more success with operational maneuver than with attrition warfare in World War I. If the U.S. army was going to be able to counter the global threat presented by Germany, it needed a commander that understood modern combined arms warfare and could take the fight to the enemy; that commander was George S. Patton Jr.

Patton needed to improve upon U.S. army institutional memory that was based on attrition warfare and the trenches of World War I. Attrition warfare seeks victory by destroying the enemy mass in a frontal assault. Patton had learned the costs of attrition warfare in World War I and did not want to repeat the mistakes of history. He sought to modernize army doctrine by pairing maneuver and combined arms into a task organized air and ground force, much like the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF). *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1: Warfighting*, describes maneuver warfare as a war fighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy's cohesion through a variety of rapid, focused, and unexpected actions, which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope.<sup>2</sup> Combined arms warfare is the



synchronized and simultaneous application of the elements of combat power to achieve an effect greater than if each element of combat power was used separately or sequentially.<sup>3</sup> Patton successfully combined the elements of combat power (air, armor, artillery, and infantry), maneuver warfare at the operational level, and a task organization that included air liaison officers and co-located aviation headquarters that coordinated close air support and interdiction, to create combined arms operational maneuver.

From 1 August 1944 to 7 May 1945, General George S. Patton and his Third Army tirelessly battled, defeated, and pursued the German Army from Normandy to the Rhine River. Patton achieved rapid success on the battlefields of Northwest Europe by combining the firepower and flexibility of combined arms and the speed of maneuver to create combined arms operational maneuver. Combined arms operational maneuver, Patton's "American Blitzkrieg," continues to influence U.S. army doctrine today.

### **WWI Lessons Learned**

Patton, a cavalryman at heart, was heavily influenced by the introduction and success of tanks in World War I. Although these armored vehicles lacked the speed needed to perform true operational maneuver and attack the enemy's flank, they were able to break through and penetrate deep into enemy territory. This ability would be demonstrated successfully at Cambrai and then during the Saint-Mihiel Offensive. The battle of Cambrai (Figure 1) on 20 November 1917 included 476 British tanks supported by 1,000 guns and six infantry divisions moving across "no man's land" towards the Hindenburg line.<sup>4</sup> In only a few short hours, this team of armor, infantry, and artillery had broken through the trenches and penetrated over four miles into German held territory. The success would be short lived when the

British failed to properly reinforce and could not withstand a stiff German counter attack. Despite this shortfall, the British tanks at Cambrai had taken more ground than the one hundred thousand troops used by Gen. Sir Hubert Gough's Fifth Army during the massive and costly Third Battle of Ypres in July 1917.<sup>5</sup> Patton came away convinced that tanks, acting in conjunction with air, artillery, and infantry, could restore mobility to the battlefield.<sup>6</sup> Patton got a chance to test American maneuver on 12 September 1918 in the Saint-Mihiel Offensive.

To this point in the war, the primary purpose of tanks was to support the infantry. Saint-Mihiel proved that tanks could operate independently of infantry. The Saint-Mihiel salient (Figure 2) was a German bulge twenty-five miles wide and fifteen miles deep in the American sector of the Allied line. To counter this offensive, 174 tanks drove deep into enemy territory despite muddy terrain, multiple trenches, and a shortage of fuel. Although only a small part of a larger operation, as a tank brigade commander, Patton gained renown for being the leader of "the only known successful operation of tanks absolutely unaided by other troops in attacking the enemy,"<sup>7</sup> when eight tanks drove the enemy back almost four miles, capturing four cannons and twelve machine guns. To Patton, this demonstrated the power of mobile armor, even unaided by infantry, to provide deep penetration and support a breakthrough. Patton began to see the value of armor supported by aircraft as well. Patton opined:

Such a [tank and aerial] force could be used in a manner analogous to that employed by Napoleon with his heavy cavalry. The tanks and attack planes or a large proportion of them should be held as a reserve to be used after a general battle had developed the enemies plans and suck in his reserves. Then at the predetermined time and place this force should be launched ruthlessly and in mass.<sup>8</sup>

Yet the aircraft and tanks of World War I did not have the capability to truly exploit the gains made on the battlefield. Not until World War II with improvements in armor and airpower was Patton able to prove the devastating capability of combined arms operational maneuver.

### **XIX Tactical Air Command: Firepower, Speed, and Task Organization**

A combined arms force is composed of elements of the principal combat arms: infantry, artillery, armor, and air. Mobility and maneuver could only be restored through the combination of all weapons working together.<sup>9</sup> The Sherman tank, mechanized infantry, and self-propelled artillery greatly increased mobility for Patton in World War II. And although famous for his use of armor, Patton's secret for success in Europe was air power. Air power was often the only armament that could keep pace with Patton's rapidly moving armored columns. Brigadier General Weyland and XIX Tactical Air Command (TAC) filled the need for firepower, maneuver, and flexibility through a task organization that supported combined arms operational maneuver.

Instead of dominating and using a heavy hand with his junior air commander, Patton embraced a relationship fostered on mutual respect and acknowledgment that aircraft are best commanded by aviators. "I had full control of the air," Weyland stated later, "the decisions were mine as to how I would allocate the air effort."<sup>10</sup> Patton called the relationship between XIX TAC and his Third Army as "love at first sight."<sup>11</sup> Both generals readily embraced Field Manual 31-35 of 1942 and its emphasis on the importance of close cooperation of air and ground commanders:

The basis of effective air support of ground forces is teamwork. The air and ground units in such operations in fact form a combat team. Each

member of the team must have the technical skill and training to enable it to perform its part in the operation and a willingness to cooperate thoroughly.<sup>12</sup>

Relying on his experience in Operations Torch and Husky [British-American invasion of French North Africa and Sicily respectively], to improve air ground support, Patton recommended extensive joint planning that included the assignment of well trained air staff officers to all divisions and higher G-3 operations sections.<sup>13</sup> The extensive joint planning resulted in a better understanding of the capabilities and limitations on both sides. To ensure a smooth transition between joint planning and joint operations, Patton also assigned ground liaison officers to XIX TAC units, thus ensuring proper coordination and speed of the targeting process.

XIX TAC and Third Army historian, David Spires, suggests Patton certainly understood that air support had become critical to an Army that emphasized mobility over firepower.<sup>14</sup> As War Department planners made conscious decisions to provide the Army primarily with light and medium artillery, the reliance on tactical aviation for additional heavy artillery support would be essential.<sup>15</sup> Patton also advocated the limited use of an air umbrella due to limited aviation assets. His solution called for aircraft circling 10 minutes of every hour over sensitive areas of the front, with a secondary bombing mission assigned to them afterward.<sup>16</sup> Patton concluded that if they possessed radio communication with the air support unit on the ground, "any counterattack can be met from the air."<sup>17</sup> The ability to quickly coordinate with ground forces through air liaison officers attached to ground units became the only way that tightly stretched air assets could effectively cover Patton's

racing army in Europe. This was the concept of armored column cover that allowed Patton to use air power as a maneuver element despite the vast distances along the front.

### **Cobra, the Breakout, and Patton's Combined Arms Operational Maneuver**

The D-Day landings commenced successfully on 6 June 1944 and a foothold into "Fortress Europe" was obtained. Despite this foothold, Field Marshall Montgomery failed repeatedly to take the crucial city of Caen and by the end of June the two sides were locked in a ferocious stalemate. Patton correctly surmised, "apparently things are not going well and one gets the impression that people are satisfied to be holding on, rather than advancing."<sup>18</sup> Eisenhower realized the danger of not breaking through the German resistance when he said, "sometimes I wish I had George Patton here."<sup>19</sup> Besides the obvious danger of getting pushed back into the sea was a repeat of a "World War I-type stalemate."<sup>20</sup>

Patton, soon to be leading Third Army, arrived in Normandy on 6 July 1944. Operation Cobra, Omar Bradley's plan to conduct a massive aerial bombardment along a narrow front in order to break through the hedgerows and into the city of Avranches and the plains of Brittany commenced on 25 July 1944. Patton may not have had any direct input in the operational planning for Cobra, but he did understand what was needed to break through, which was combined arms operational maneuver. Much like the trenches of World War I, the formidable hedgerows in France favored the defender and prevented maneuver. Yet Patton was optimistic if given a chance he could break the stalemate. In his diary he remarked:

I could break through in three days if I commanded. They [Bradley and Lieutenant General Courtney Hodges] try to push all along the front and

have no power anywhere. All that is necessary now is to take chances by leading with armored divisions and covering their advance with airbursts. Such an attack would have to be made on a narrow sector, whereas at present we are trying to attack all along the line.<sup>21</sup>

Bradley performed just such a task except with a massive aerial carpet-bombing instead of air burst artillery. Operation Cobra achieved results beyond its planner's comprehension. By 28 July, it became apparent Bradley had achieved a breakout and not a breakthrough. It was time to turn Patton loose.<sup>22</sup>

The breakout of Normandy (Figure 3) gave Patton an opportunity to exercise his form of combined arms operational maneuver warfare. Patton was now in his element, in command of an Army with an enemy on the ropes, and he immediately made his intentions clear, "The thing to do is rush them off their feet before they get set."<sup>23</sup> Patton was directed by Bradley to drive south and southwest from the Avranches region to secure the Rennes and Fougères area in eastern Brittany, turn west to capture the Brittany peninsula and seize the ports, and simultaneously prepare for operations farther to the east.<sup>24</sup> To accomplish this, Patton ordered the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Division to drive west towards Brest and the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division south towards Rennes.

To support the campaign he gave XIX TAC five different missions:

1. To protect the southern exposed flank of Third Army along the Loire River.
2. To retain air superiority.
3. To conduct armed reconnaissance deep behind German lines.
4. To assist advancing columns with armored column cover (ACC).
5. To support ground units in the capture of the Brittany ports of Brest, Lorient, and St. Malo.<sup>25</sup>

Patton later sung Weyland's praise to Hap Arnold, the boss of the Army Air Corps, "for about 250 miles I have seen the calling cards of the fighter bombers"<sup>26</sup>,

referencing burned out German vehicles and bullet holes in the concrete due to .50 caliber machine guns from P-47 aircraft.

The combined arms operational maneuver machine that was 3<sup>rd</sup> Army and XIX TAC was pushing hard throughout the Brittany peninsula. Patton would profess, “in exactly two weeks the Third Army has advanced farther and faster than any army in the history of war.”<sup>27</sup> On 3 August 1944, Patton was finally permitted to turn eastward, yet he was ordered to leave forces of VIII Corps to lay siege to the port city of Brest. Brest would not fall until 19 September 1944, and by this time the logistic value of the port city was lost as Allied armies were too far to the east to be supported easily.

The Brittany peninsula campaign was a huge tactical success worthy of constant headlines in western papers but an operational failure as Patton was not allowed to pursue east immediately after a thoroughly defeated German 7<sup>th</sup> Army. As his disgruntled 4<sup>th</sup> armored commander Major General Wood said, “we’re winning this war the wrong way, we ought to be going toward Paris.”<sup>28</sup>

The decision to take the Brittany peninsula and the city of Brest belonged to Bradley and was based on an Allied plan that had not been adjusted since the success of Cobra. Bradley was determined not to embark on any reckless headlong advances southeastwards unless he was certain of holding the Avranches gap in their rear toward the Brittany peninsula. “We can’t risk a loose hinge,” stated Bradley, fearing a German counter attack north-northwest wards breaking through the coast and cutting off Patton’s armored divisions. Bradley would take full responsibility for the decision to swing large American forces west into Brittany.<sup>29</sup> Although his superior, Patton should have convinced Bradley of the immediate need to turn the pursuit east towards Paris after the

fleeing German Army. Patton historian D'Este, counter argues that although Patton had concluded that operations in Brittany could be minimized while the remainder of the Third Army drove toward the Seine through the Orleans gap-he felt unable to act aggressively, as he undoubtedly would have had his and Bradley's roles been reversed.<sup>30</sup> By turning east immediately instead of west into the peninsula, the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored could have opened the way to cutting off the Germans at the Seine. When Wood was finally permitted to turn to the east on 15 August, it was too late.<sup>31</sup> A possible explanation for Bradley's hesitancy was that he had not counted on the rapid deterioration of the German army due to the massive aerial bombardment and decided to "play it safe." Not turning east allowed countless 7<sup>th</sup> Army troops to escape and divided Patton's combined arms operational maneuver team when VIII Corps was left to lay siege to Brittany and XIX TAC assets were diverted from the main effort to support them. British historian B. H. Liddell Hart asserted "the diversion to capture the Brittany ports brought [to the Allies] no benefit."<sup>32</sup>

### **Falaise Gap**

Patton's combined arms operational maneuver warfare performed brilliantly during the breakout, yet an important opportunity to knock out the German 7<sup>th</sup> Army was lost by not pursuing the enemy eastward immediately. Another opportunity to knock out the 7<sup>th</sup> Army would present itself in the early hours of 7 August 1944 when the regrouped forces attacked with three panzer divisions toward Avranches. Patton was well aware of the possibility of a German counter attack due to XIX TAC armed reconnaissance flights overflying the Avranches bottleneck since 2 August.<sup>33</sup> As the German counter attack was repulsed at Mortain, 7<sup>th</sup> Army and elements of the Fifth Panzer Army were in a real



danger of being encircled by the Allies. Bradley proclaimed it was “an opportunity that comes to a commander not more than once in a century. We’re about to destroy an entire hostile army.... We’ll go all the way from here to the German border.”<sup>34</sup>

As the First Canadian Army moved south toward the city of Falaise, Patton’s XV Corps moved toward Argentan to complete the double envelopment. In support was the XIX TAC demonstrating its flexibility in combined arms operational maneuver. XIX TAC was tasked with guarding Patton’s right flank, where they could “blast away at armored columns east and south of Paris.”<sup>35</sup> The support of XIX TAC allowed Patton to spend less time worrying about exposed flanks and counter attacks while providing, “on call close air support.”<sup>36</sup>

The Canadians failed to take Falaise due to stiff German resistance, and as Patton took Argentan, a twelve-mile gap remained between the two cities through which the Germans could escape. On 12 August Patton directed XV Corps to move north of Argentan toward Falaise. Before he could commence his move to close the gap north of Argentan, Bradley told him to “Halt!”<sup>37</sup> Patton tried to regain momentum on 14 August by asking Bradley to strike east toward the Seine River. As Patton held Argentan with a small force he moved east until 15 August when Bradley told him that it had been decided at SHAEF not to proceed any further east because it was feared that XV Corps would not be able to contain the escaping German forces.

The decision to stop on 12 August and then again on 15 August would prove to be very controversial decisions by Bradley because the failure to close the gap until 20 August allowed an estimated 50,000 German troops to escape east to fight another day.<sup>38</sup> Constantly pausing and allowing enemy forces to escape or regroup became an all too

commonplace event for Patton as he employed combined arms operational maneuver east toward Germany.

Patton believed that XV Corps “could have gone on to Falaise and made contact with the Canadians northwest of that point, and definitely and positively closed the escape gap.”<sup>39</sup> Such a closure would have given the Allies a decisive victory. Bradley’s worry about being over run by retreating forces was warranted but could have been overcome. These survivors retreated eastward in disarray, mostly on foot; their heavy weapons and armor remained behind, most of it destroyed in the savage battles around Trun and Chambois.<sup>40</sup> As Trun and Chambois are just outside of the Falaise Gap, the longer envelopment Patton envisioned as he drove toward the Seine would have allowed Montgomery’s 2<sup>nd</sup> British Army to move around the Canadians and complete the double envelopment with XV Corps reinforced with VII Corps. Of further consideration is that Patton was short his VIII Corps and elements of the XIX TAC as they continued to try and take Brest. If that force had been immediately available to reinforce Argentan, Bradley may not have worried about being overrun. Patton understood that the Allies had the initiative and was Blumenson notes:

the single commander who grasped what needed to be done and how to do it. All three [Montgomery, Eisenhower, and Bradley] were so intent on deciding where to execute the post-Overlord operations beyond the Seine River that they paid little attention to closing the jaws at Falaise or at the Seine.<sup>41</sup>

### **Broad Front, Lorraine, and Gas**

During the breakout and Falaise Gap, Patton’s combined arms operational maneuver warfare had moved Third Army over 250 miles in 17 days.<sup>42</sup> XIX TAC found its ability to support this speeding giant becoming more difficult as requirements to

provide bombing attacks on Brest to the east, armed reconnaissance missions in support of Patton's G-2, and ACC covering Patton's flanks stretched thin already limited assets.<sup>43</sup> The requirements to cover increasingly distant front lines were complicated by the lack of suitable airfields in the east and resulting short on station times for fuel starved aircraft. Despite these difficulties, Patton continued to pursue German forces east through Lorraine to the Siegfried line (Figure 4).

On 19 August 1944, Eisenhower implemented his "broad front" strategy, with all the Armies continuing to move forward in order to stretch the German defenses, and according to Blumenson, "preserves equal glory for the Allied forces."<sup>44</sup> Yet it would never accomplish this goal. This solution sought to make the major Allied effort north of the Ardennes in Montgomery's Twenty-First Army Group sector, supported by a secondary push in Bradley's Twelfth Army Group sector of which Patton was a part.<sup>45</sup> This plan also involved the majority of Hodge's First Army (belonging to Bradley) and Patton's XV Corps supporting Montgomery in the north. Patton and the rest of the U.S. forces would not be receiving equal glory, or equal supplies.

In August, 3<sup>rd</sup> Army had employed combined arms operational maneuver virtually unchecked across southern France and into Lorraine. As Patton's Army got further away from the fuel dumps in Normandy, logistics, and not German resistance would slow 3<sup>rd</sup> Army down. This is an instance in which Patton failed to realize the limitations of combined arms operational maneuver. An army runs on fuel and bullets and Patton was running out of both. The "broad front" strategy tried and failed to maintain supplies to four Allied armies advancing across Europe. The logistics planners could not have planned for the rapid success of Patton's forces and would have had difficulty under

normal circumstances meeting his fuel and ammunition needs. The lack of supplies was further complicated as Montgomery developed his plan for Operation Market Garden, a joint air-borne armored assault into Holland. To support Monty's plan, Eisenhower gave him priority for fuel. Patton realized that he needed to continue to pursue the Germans before they could fortify defensive positions at the Siegfried line. Author Daniel Yergin attests the decisions made at this critical moment of the war were part of what Patton called the "unforgiving minute"<sup>46</sup> of history. Patton seethed, "No one realizes its terrible value...except me. We got no gas because, to suit Monty, the First Army must gets most of it..."<sup>47</sup> This would prove to be quite prophetic as Patton would face his most difficult fighting in the coming months as the Germans were allowed to regroup after a forced pause. Throughout the month of September, Patton continued to beg, borrow, and steal to get fuel and ammunition. "Dammit, Brad, just give me 400,000 gallons of gasoline and I'll put you inside Germany in two days."<sup>48</sup> With Eisenhower's Broad Front Strategy and the approach of Market Garden on 17 September 1944, the pumps truly ran dry and whatever opportunity existed to have driven uncontested to the Siegfried Line had passed.

By November 1944 the Lorraine campaign had degenerated into what Bradley has called "a ghastly war of attrition."<sup>49</sup> Patton was unable to continue his combined arms operational maneuver campaign as a stiffening German defense formed about the Siegfried Line, further multiplied by losing two of his four Corps (VIII and XV) to First Army (to support Market Garden). "Books will some day be written," he informed Beatrice (his wife), "on that 'pause which did not refresh' any one but the Germans,"<sup>50</sup> referring to the forced pause in September and October. He simply faced a situation of

“too little gas and too many Germans, not enough ammo and more than enough rain.”<sup>51</sup>

Only with the most massive aerial bombardment since Cobra and heavy fighting in the city to root out German defenders did Metz finally fall on 22 November 1944.<sup>52</sup> The battle for Lorraine ended on 13 December when the last German defenders surrendered.

The Lorraine Campaign can clearly not be seen as a triumph of combined arms operational maneuver warfare but a triumph for American tenacity. Poor weather, lack of supplies, and a determined enemy fought desperately against 3<sup>rd</sup> Army. If Patton had been allowed to continue toward the Siegfried line at the end of August, the Germans may not have had an opportunity to fortify their defensive positions. Patton cited 29 August as the critical date:

Hereafter pages will be written on it.... It was evident that at the time there was no real threat against us as long as we did not stop ourselves or allow ourselves to be stopped by imaginary enemies. Everything seemed rosy when suddenly it was reported to me that the 140,000 gallons of gasoline, which we were supposed to get for that day, did not arrive. I presented my case for a rapid advance to the east for the purpose of cutting the Siegfried Line before it could be manned. It is my opinion that this was the momentous error of the war.<sup>53</sup>

D’Este claims that Patton was not a victim of Eisenhower or Montgomery, but of the broad-front strategy and a logistics system incapable of keeping pace with maneuver warfare.<sup>54</sup> If Patton had been given the gas and ammunition to go around or through Lorraine, Hitler would have moved forces out of the north to protect his southern flank. The repositioning of forces may have allowed Montgomery and First Army to be successful with Operation Market Garden. Momentum lost is not easily regained, unless it was Patton relieving First Army during the Battle of the Bulge.

## **Battle of the Bulge and the Relief of Bastogne**

The Battle of the Bulge (Figure 5) began on 16 December 1944 when two panzer armies and the German 7<sup>th</sup> Army attacked with over 200,000 men in a heavily wooded section of the Ardennes forest lightly defended by 80,000 new and replacement American troops of the First Army. The lightly defended American sector was quickly overwhelmed. In his diary, Patton wrote, “the German attack is on a wide front and moving fast...this may be a feint...although at the moment it looks like the real thing. Had the V and VIII Corps of the First Army been more aggressive the Germans could not have prepared this attack; one must never sit still.”<sup>55</sup> Patton’s criticism of First Army, although warranted, was unjust. Bradley had defended the area with two newly arrived, inexperienced infantry divisions, and two battered veteran divisions absorbing replacements,<sup>56</sup> which were certainly the only forces available at the time. Patton’s forethought and warning about the consequences of letting the German’s rest and regroup months earlier was being realized in Bastogne. Therefore, before he met with Eisenhower and the other commanders, he told his staff to prepare a rough plan based upon combined arms operational maneuver north along one of three axis to Bastogne. The only certainty to Patton was that “while we were accustomed to rapid movement, we would now have to prove that we could operate even faster.”<sup>57</sup>

Eisenhower asked Patton on 19 December, “George, I want you to command this move, under Brad’s supervision of course, making a strong counter-attack with at least six divisions. When can you attack?”<sup>58</sup> Patton replied that he could move three divisions by the 22<sup>nd</sup> and that if he waited to for six divisions, he would “lose surprise.”<sup>59</sup> This

would prove to be Patton's finest hour and he "never hesitated but embraced the opportunity to turn a potential military debacle into a triumph."<sup>60</sup>

Patton realized the need for speed, maneuver, firepower, and decisiveness; all the elements of warfare that made his combined arms operational maneuver so effective. He began moving towards Bastogne on 22 December with three divisions just as promised; 4<sup>th</sup> Armored on the left, 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry in the center, and 80<sup>th</sup> Infantry on the right, supported by a reinforced XIX TAC with 360 airplanes.<sup>61</sup> Despite sub-zero temperatures, ice and snow, narrow roads, and increasing German resistance, Patton's forces would move 100,000 troops and tens of thousands of vehicles 125 miles in four days.<sup>62</sup>

For XIX TAC, 23-27 December became the most active in the command's operational history as a high-pressure system brought clear skies.<sup>63</sup> During this time the command flew 57 missions per day on average to include close air support, armed column cover, and armed reconnaissance. Much like the drive across France during August, the XIX TAC was again guarding Patton's right flank.<sup>64</sup>

The 4th Armored Division relieved Bastogne on 26 December 1944, however the Battle of the Bulge would not officially end 12 January 1945. On that day, Patton would confide in his diary, "I believe that today ends the Bastogne operation. From now on it is simply a question of driving a defeated enemy...I believe that Bastogne operation is the biggest and best the Third Army has accomplished..."<sup>65</sup> This was likely quite true as German losses in the Bulge were enormous and irreplaceable. A Third Army after-action report estimated 96,500 enemy killed, 269,000 wounded, and 163,000 POWs along with over 4,000 medium and heavy tanks and guns.<sup>66</sup>

Winston Churchill hailed the Battle of the Bulge as “the greatest American battle of the war that will, I believe, be regarded as an ever famous American victory.”<sup>67</sup> First Army and the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne deserve enormous credit for slowing the German onslaught and holding the northern shoulder, but it was Patton that turned the tide of the battle and became a shining example of the power of combined arms operational maneuver. Patton’s ability to relieve “three divisions from the line, turn them north, and travel over icy roads to Arlon to prepare for a major counterattack in less than seventy two hours was astonishing, even to a group accustomed to flexibility.”<sup>68</sup> This was Patton’s and Third Army’s finest hour. No one else could have pulled off such a feat.<sup>69</sup> It was also the crowning achievement for Patton’s combined arms operational maneuver.

After Bastogne, Eisenhower returned to his “broad-front” strategy and Patton was again relegated to a supporting status on the SHAEF’s right flank. Again, SHAEF and Eisenhower took a conservative view and failed to attack von Rundstedt’s defeated armies.

### **Crossing the Rhine and the End of the Third Reich**

Patton continued to employ combined arms operational maneuver and push into Germany but again as a supporting effort to Montgomery’s in the north. Patton told his staff, “It would be a foolish and ignoble way for the Americans to end the war by sitting on their asses, and gentlemen, we aren’t going to do anything foolish or ignoble like that—of course.”<sup>70</sup> The first challenge for Patton’s combined arms operational maneuver was the Eifel sector of the Siegfried line which was bisected by the Moselle, Our, and Sauer Rivers. As Patton prepared for another rapid attack on 10 February, he was told to “assume a posture of aggressive defense” But Patton was not the type of commander to



act defensively and “chose to view it as an order to keep moving toward the Rhine with a low profile.”<sup>71</sup> It seemed that Patton would again be stopped the same way he was in September and August 1944. “I wonder if ever before in the history of the war, a winning general had to plead to be allowed to keep on winning,” he mused.<sup>72</sup>

Patton took Trier in early March with Walker’s 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. Just after the fall of the city, Patton was told by Bradley to bypass Trier, as it would take four divisions to capture it, leading Patton to exclaim, “Have taken Trier with two divisions. Do you want me to give it back?”<sup>73</sup> With Trier subdued, Patton pressed a plan to exploit his combined arms operational maneuver across the Rhine and into Germany.

On 7 March 1945, 4<sup>th</sup> Armored reached the Rhine (Figure 6) in a successful dash that covered fifty miles in less than forty-eight hours; after having arrived at the Rhine, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> armored moved north from Coblenz to meet up with Hodges’s First Army. A series of good flying days allowed XIX TAC to provide wall-to-wall air support that seemed limited only by the difficulty of keeping pace with the ground forces.<sup>74</sup>

From 11 March to 25 March, Third Army hammered the Germans in the Saar-Palatinate, and Moselle sectors. Third Army’s sudden advance across the Rhine on 22 March had unhinged the entire German defensive south of the Mosel. Seeing the closing trap and realizing the futility of resistance, the defenders began a frantic mass evacuation to escape the rapidly closing trap. The resultant congestion of surface traffic reminded airmen of similar turkey shoots that had occurred in France at Falaise and Bastogne. In the words of one XIX TAC official, it was a “fighter-bomber’s paradise.”<sup>75</sup>

One account describes how:

Patton's forces seemed to be everywhere at once-attacking the Westwall's (Siegfried Line) concrete casement from the rear, racing through the center of the Palantinate, sweeping southward along the Rhine itself. On March 19 alone the Third Army overran more than 950 square miles of territory.<sup>76</sup>

Patton received extensive praise for his offensive action in March but the most telling success of combined arms operational maneuver was a message from U.S. Ninth Air Force commander, Hoyt Vandenberg, "that is the way to fight a war, keep driving. My pilots will fly their hearts out in a battle like that."<sup>77</sup>

Much like his start on 28 July 1944, Patton pushed the defeated German army all the way to the Czechoslovakian border and only to be stopped by Eisenhower's order (reinforced by Bradley) when he said, "You hear me, George, goddamnit, halt!"<sup>78</sup>

Patton's war was over as the Germans surrendered on 7 May 1945.

A desperate counter attack in the Ardennes during the Battle of the Bulge proved that Germany was not defeated in early 1945. After suffering heavy losses in that battle, the Germans were again allowed to fall back and regroup as Eisenhower reset his lines in favor of a "broad front" strategy. Patton was forced to play an "active defense" role in the Eifel sector and wouldn't break out until after the capture of Trier. With the capture of Trier, Patton once again proved that combined arms operational maneuver warfare could defeat static defenses as his 3<sup>rd</sup> Army and XIX TAC team punched through the Siegfried line and over the Rhine River. Patton had to be ordered to stop before crossing into Czechoslovakia and liberating Prague before the Russians. If Patton had taken Prague, the Cold War may have turned out much differently.

## Conclusion

General George S. Patton understood the value of maneuver over attrition warfare. The lightning drives of blitzkrieg maneuver across Poland and France were unthinkable during the trench warfare of World War I. Patton achieved rapid success on the battlefields of Northwest Europe by combining the firepower and flexibility of combined arms and the speed of maneuver to create combined arms operational maneuver. Combined arms operational maneuver, Patton's "American Blitzkrieg," continues to heavily influence U.S. Army doctrine today.

Although mechanized troops, self propelled artillery, tank destroyers, and tanks are essential to Patton's mobility, air power and the cooperation with Brigadier General Weyland and his XIX TAC were the secrets to combined arms operational maneuver and victory. The ability to create such a responsive team was due to a mutual understanding and respect between Patton and Weyland and a realization that priority one was support of the ground forces. Patton also made excellent use of armed aerial reconnaissance to feed his voracious appetite for intelligence. As Robert S. Allen writes, "Patton never made a move without first consulting G-2. That explains why Third Army was never surprised and why it always smashed through vulnerable sectors in the enemy's lines."<sup>79</sup> As Patton raced across France, he would also use XIX TAC to cover his forces to free up additional assets to push forward. When asked about his flanks, Patton replied, "No worries, the Air Force takes care of my flanks."<sup>80</sup> General Weyland was very succinct when he lent his views on the use of airpower and combined arms operational maneuver:

We'd sort of thrown away the book, and we were making up new rules of engagement as we went along. I had what we called armored-column

cover, for example. All during the daylight hours when the ground forces were fighting or advancing, Gen. Patton advanced in parallel columns normally, and always spearheaded by armor. I had liaison officers up in the lead tanks in every one of these columns-an Air Force officer guiding the leading tank with a radio, so that he could talk with the aircraft. Then I had fighter bombers, which preceded the columns, knowing where they were supposed to go. They would locate enemy opposition...let them know, and in most cases knock out the opposition before the American tanks got there...

Yes, the artillery could have done it, (knock out enemy positions), but it would stop the entire column...it would take hours to do it...The secret was to keep the Germans off balance, just to keep the show on the road.<sup>81</sup>

Patton's ability to wage war with speed and firepower quickly exploited the breakout after Cobra, the Falaise Gap, the Battle of the Bulge, and crossing the Rhine. Only in the Lorraine campaign would he be forced to battle it out toe to toe with the German defenders and that was due to his own misunderstanding of the weakness of overstretched supply lines and a lack of aggressiveness from Eisenhower and Bradley.

During the breakout of Normandy, Patton was turned west into the Brittany peninsula instead of pursuing an army that had just been carpet bombed by Bradley. He was not allowed to close the Falaise Gap and 50,000 Germans escaped to "fight another day." At Lorraine, Patton was forced to stop because of a lack of supplies that had been diverted to Montgomery. This allowed the fleeing Germans time to regroup and put up a stiff resistance. The only time Eisenhower and Montgomery took the leash off Patton was during the Battle of the Bulge and the relief of Bastogne; and Patton was able to move 100,000 troops and tens of thousands of vehicles 125 miles in only a few days. Even after this huge victory, SHAEF and Eisenhower didn't heed Patton's advice and aggressively pursue a defeated enemy and achieve a decisive victory. The "broad front" policy was again adopted and Patton was put into an "aggressive defense." He overcame

these restraints and unleashed his combined arms operational maneuver a third time and pierced the Siegfried line and crossed the Rhine River. If Patton had been allowed to conduct combined arms operational maneuver on his terms, the Falaise Gap would have closed, Lorraine may have been captured sooner, the Bulge may have not happened, and Patton would have possibly been in Germany before the end of December.

Patton never got a chance to personally exert his influence on post World War II Army doctrine because he was tragically killed in a car crash shortly after the war. His use and influence of combined arms operational maneuver, however, continues to live on in current U.S. Army doctrine. During Operation Desert Storm, Coalition forces consisting of modern aircraft, artillery, armor, and infantry destroyed more than thirty divisions, captured or destroyed nearly four thousand tanks, and took almost ninety thousand prisoners in less than four days of fighting.<sup>82</sup> It was called AirLand Battle and its objective was to defeat the enemy by conducting simultaneous offensive operations over the full breadth and depth of the battlefield.<sup>83</sup> AirLand Battle used extensive air assets and a left wing envelopment maneuver into Iraqi flank and rear forces. Patton would have been in awe at the firepower available to U.S. forces but he would have immediately understood the movements on the battlefield. What Patton practiced in World War II is today an accepted means of successfully waging war.<sup>84</sup>

## NOTES:

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis Showalter, *Patton and Rommel: Men of War in the Twentieth Century* (New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 2005), 178.

<sup>2</sup> Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, Warfighting, MCDP 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, June 30, 1991), 73.

<sup>3</sup> Headquarters Department of the Army, *Operations*, FM 3-0 (Washington DC: U.S. Army, February 2008), 75.

<sup>4</sup> H. Essame, *Patton: A Study in Command* (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1974), 9.

<sup>5</sup> D'Este, 207.

<sup>6</sup> Essame, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Semmes, *Portrait of Patton* (New York: Paperback Library, 1970), 65.

<sup>8</sup> Lecture, "Tanks Past and Future, " delivered in Hawaii, Feb. 27, 1928, Box 50, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, (Library of Congress, Washington DC), quoted in Henry Semmes, *Portrait of Patton* (New York: Paperback Library, 1970), 65.

<sup>9</sup> Robert M. Citino, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 21.

<sup>10</sup> Otto P. Weyland interview, Nov 19, 1974, pp 67, 76. David N. Spires, *Air Power for Patton's Army: The XIX Tactical Air Command in the Second World War*, (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2002), 47.

<sup>11</sup> "Air Ground Teamwork on the Western Front: The Role of the XIX Tactical Air Command During August 1944," *Wings at War*, no.5 (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Army Air Forces, n.d.), 4-14.

<sup>12</sup> David N. Spires, *Air Power for Patton's Army: The XIX Tactical Air Command in the Second World War* (Washington D.C., Air Force History and Museums Program, 2002), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Spires, 47.

<sup>14</sup> Spires, 46.

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<sup>15</sup> Spires, 46.

<sup>16</sup> Spires, 46.

<sup>17</sup> Rpt, HQ Seventh Army, "Notes on the Sicilian Campaign," Oct 30, 1943. 6.

<sup>18</sup> D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 611.

<sup>19</sup> Everet S. Hughes diary, quoted in Max Hastings, *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy 1944*, (London: Vintage, 1984), 197.

<sup>20</sup> Omar N. Bradley, and Clay Blair, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 272.

<sup>21</sup> George S. Patton, Diary, July 14, 1944, quoted in Martin Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945* (Boston: Houton Mifflin Company, 1974), 482.

<sup>22</sup> D'Este, 621.

<sup>23</sup> D'Este, 245.

<sup>24</sup> Spires, 67.

<sup>25</sup> "Air Ground Teamwork on the Western Front: The Role of the XIX Tactical Air Command During August 1944," *Wings at War*, no.5 (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Army Air Forces, n.d.), 4-14.

<sup>26</sup> D'Este, 638.

<sup>27</sup> D'Este, 635.

<sup>28</sup> Caleb Carr, "The American Rommel," *MHQ Summer 1992*, quoted in Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 631.

<sup>29</sup> D'Este, 632.

<sup>30</sup> D'Este, 622.

<sup>31</sup> D'Este, 631.

<sup>32</sup> B. H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), 557.

<sup>33</sup> Spires, 86.

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- <sup>34</sup> Omar N. Bradley, *A Soldier's Story* (New York: Holt, 1951), 375-376.
- <sup>35</sup> Spires, 91.
- <sup>36</sup> Otto P. Weyland, Diary, August 6, 1944, quoted in David Spires, *Air Power for Patton's Army: The XIX Tactical Air Command in the Second World War* (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2002), 89.
- <sup>37</sup> Charles M. Province, *The Unknown Patton* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1983), 49.
- <sup>38</sup> Spires, 90.
- <sup>39</sup> George S. Patton, Diary, Aug. 16, 1944, quoted in Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 641.
- <sup>40</sup> D'Este, 643.
- <sup>41</sup> Martin Blumenson, *The Battle of Generals: The Untold Story of the Falaise Pocket: The Campaign that should have Won World War II* (New York: Morrow, 1993), 279.
- <sup>42</sup> Charles M. Province, *The Unknown Patton* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1983), 49.
- <sup>43</sup> Stanley P. Hirshon, *General Patton: A Soldier's Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 525.
- <sup>44</sup> Martin Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1949-1945* (Boston: Houton Mifflin Company, 1974), 527.
- <sup>45</sup> John Nelson Rickard, *Patton at Bay: The Lorraine Campaign, September to December, 1944* (London: Praeger, 1999), 52.
- <sup>46</sup> D'Este, 649.
- <sup>47</sup> George S. Patton, Diary, Aug. 30, 1944, quoted in Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 649.
- <sup>48</sup> Omar N. Bradley, *A Soldier's Story* (New York: Holt, 1951), 402-403.
- <sup>49</sup> Omar N. Bradley with Clay Blair, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 343.
- <sup>50</sup> Letter, George S. Patton to Beatrice Patton, Sept. 10, 1944, Box 15, PP-LC, quoted in Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 661.
- <sup>51</sup> Geoffrey Perret, *There's a War to be Won* (New York: Random House, 1991), 368.



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<sup>52</sup> D'Este, 669.

<sup>53</sup> Charles M. Province, *The Unknown Patton* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1983), 173.

<sup>54</sup> D'Este, 671.

<sup>55</sup> George S. Patton, Diary, December 17, 1944, quoted in Martin Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1949-1945* (Boston: Houton Mifflin Company, 1974), 595.

<sup>56</sup> D'Este, 674.

<sup>57</sup> D'Este, 678.

<sup>58</sup> Martin Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1949-1945* (Boston: Houton Mifflin Company, 1974), 599.

<sup>59</sup> Martin Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1949-1945* (Boston: Houton Mifflin Company, 1974), 600.

<sup>60</sup> D'Este, 681.

<sup>61</sup> Spires, 196.

<sup>62</sup> Stanley P. Hirshon, *General Patton: A Soldier's Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 584.

<sup>63</sup> Spires, 199.

<sup>64</sup> Spires, 200.

<sup>65</sup> D'Este, 693.

<sup>66</sup> George S. Patton Jr., *War as I knew It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975), 229.

<sup>67</sup> Charles B. MacDonald, *A Time for Trumpets: The Untold Story of the Battle of the Bulge*, (New York: Morrow, 1985), 618.

<sup>68</sup> D'Este, 680.

<sup>69</sup> D'Este, 702.

<sup>70</sup> George S. Patton, Diary, February 26, 1945, quoted in D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 706.

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<sup>71</sup> Omar N. Bradley with Clay Blair, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 392.

<sup>72</sup> D'Este, 705.

<sup>73</sup> Harry Semmes, *Portrait Patton* (New York: Paperback Library, 1970), 240.

<sup>74</sup> Spires, 262.

<sup>75</sup> Spires, 262.

<sup>76</sup> Franklin M. Davis, *Across the Rhine*, (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1980), 77.

<sup>77</sup> D'Este, 713.

<sup>78</sup> D'Este, 729.

<sup>79</sup> Allen, 68.

<sup>80</sup> H. H. Arnold, *Global Mission* (Pennsylvania: Tab Books, 1989), 543.

<sup>81</sup> Weyland, Otto, P., unknown interviewer, Columbia University Library, New York, 17-18, quoted in Stanley P. Hirshon, *General Patton: A Soldier's Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 523.

<sup>82</sup> Robert M. Citino, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare* (Kansas, Kansas University Press, 2004), 288.

<sup>83</sup> Robert M. Citino, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare* (Kansas, Kansas University Press, 2004), 289.

<sup>84</sup> D'Este, 811.

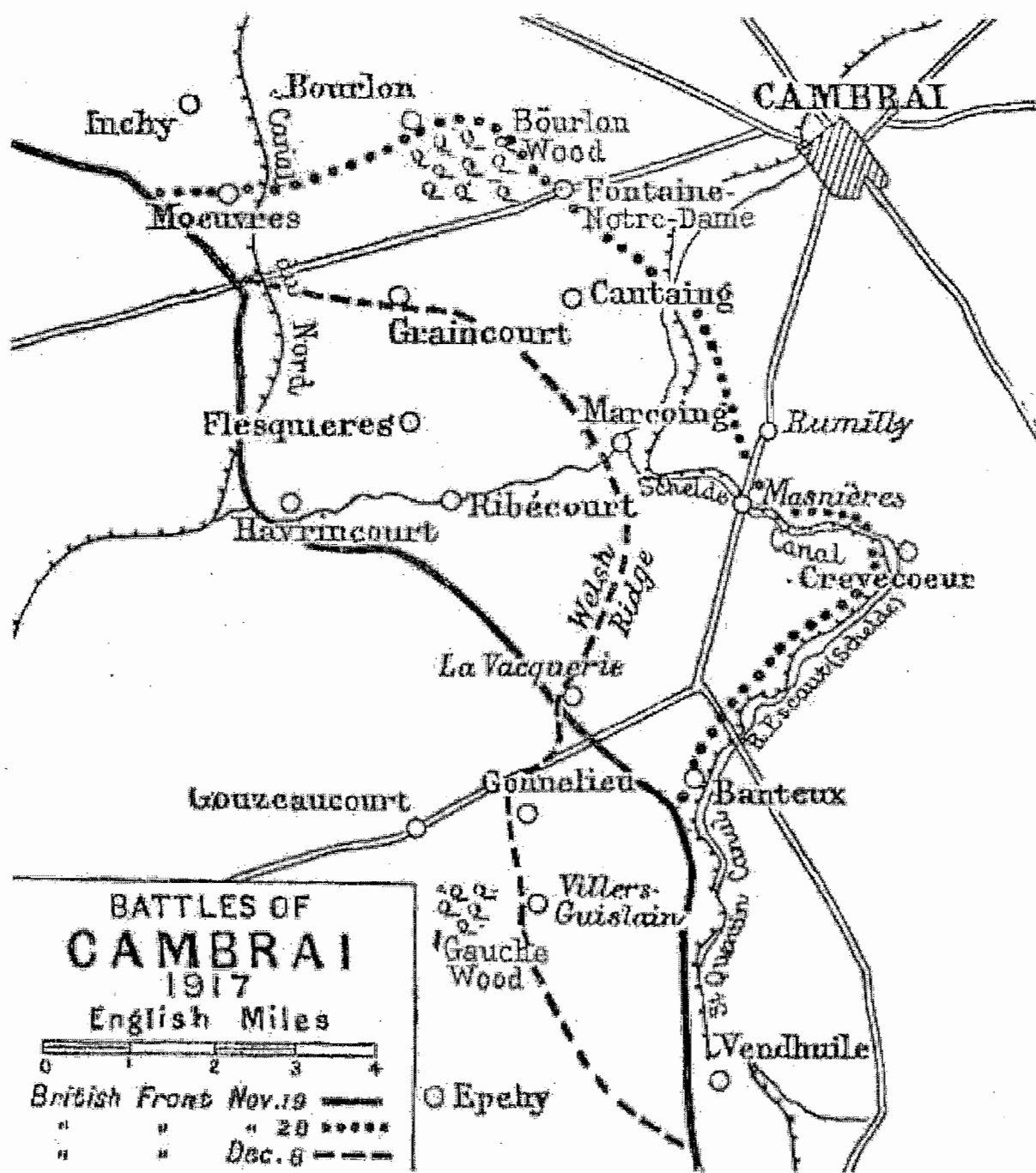
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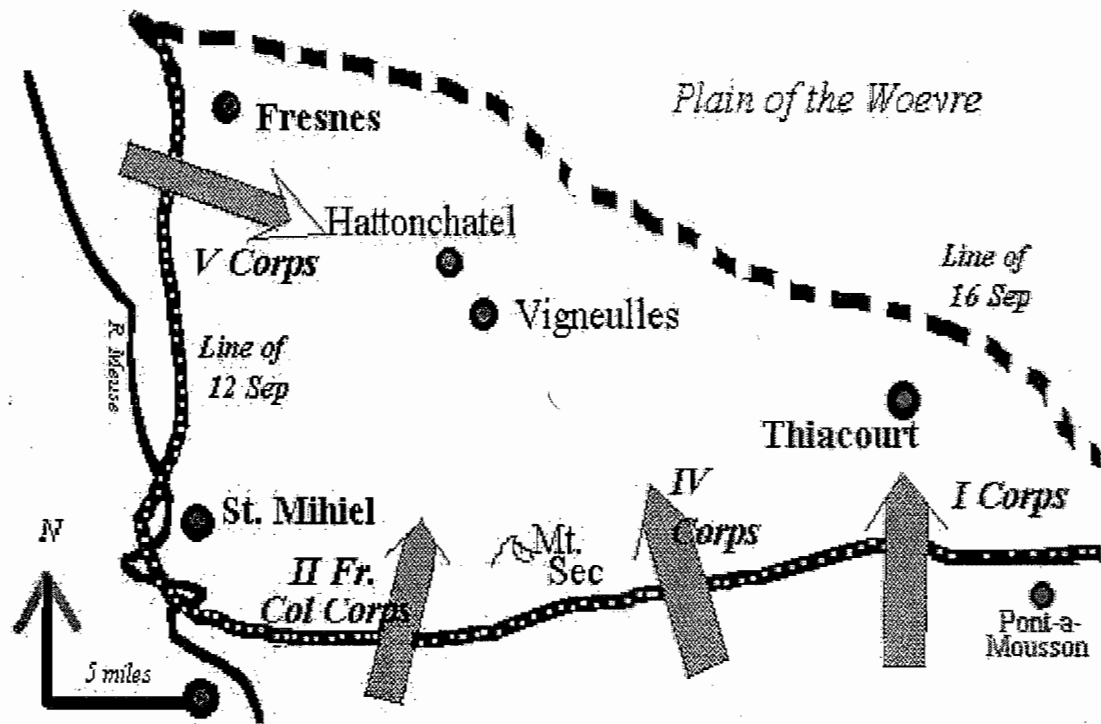
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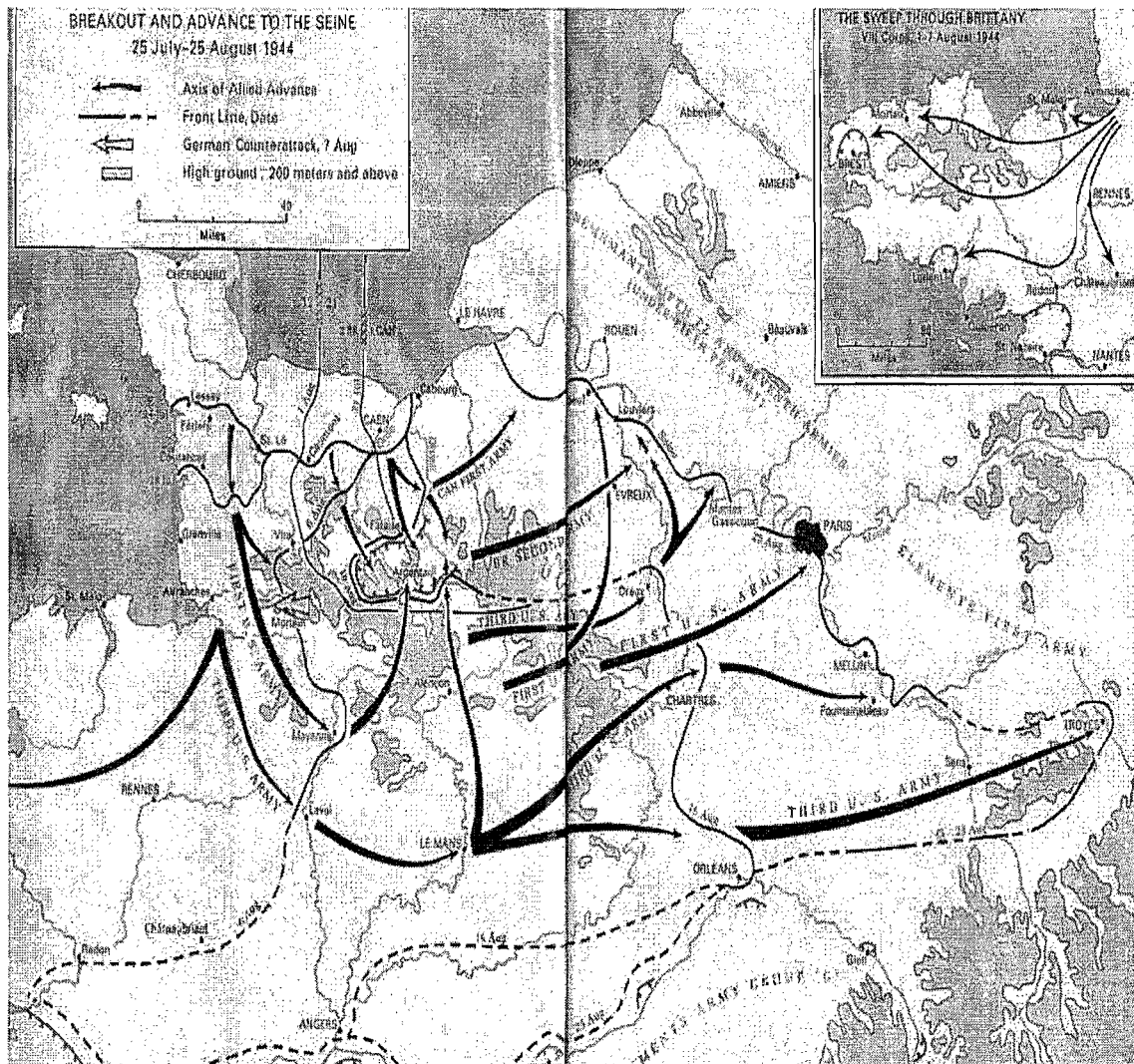
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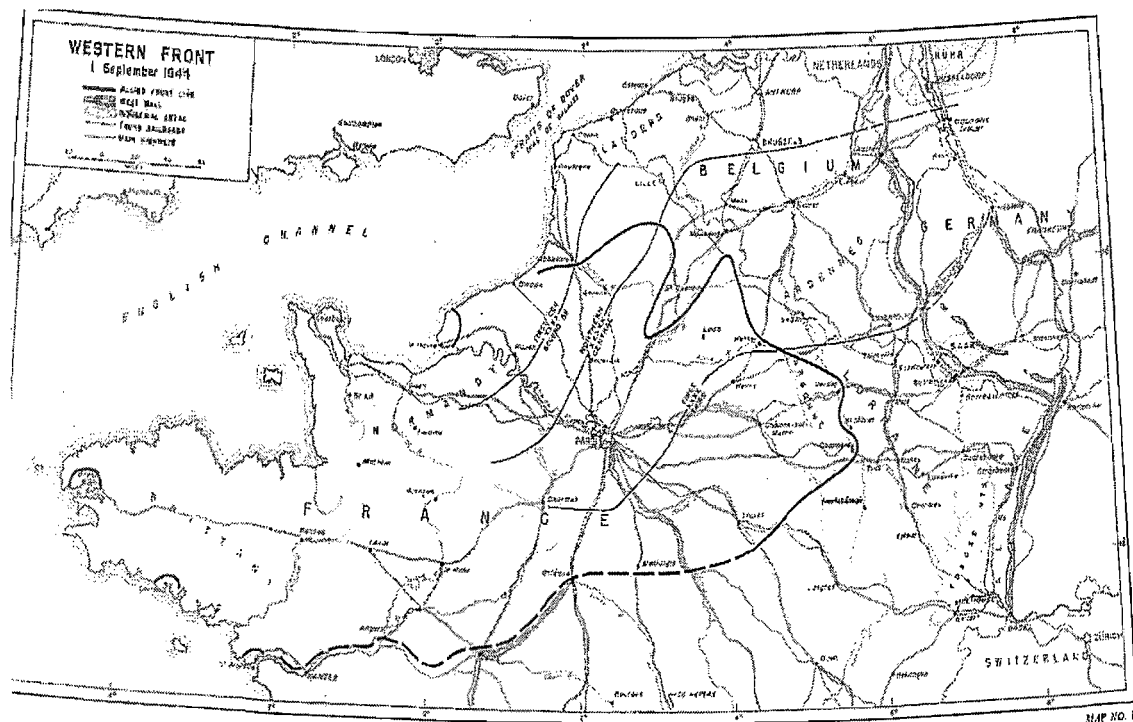
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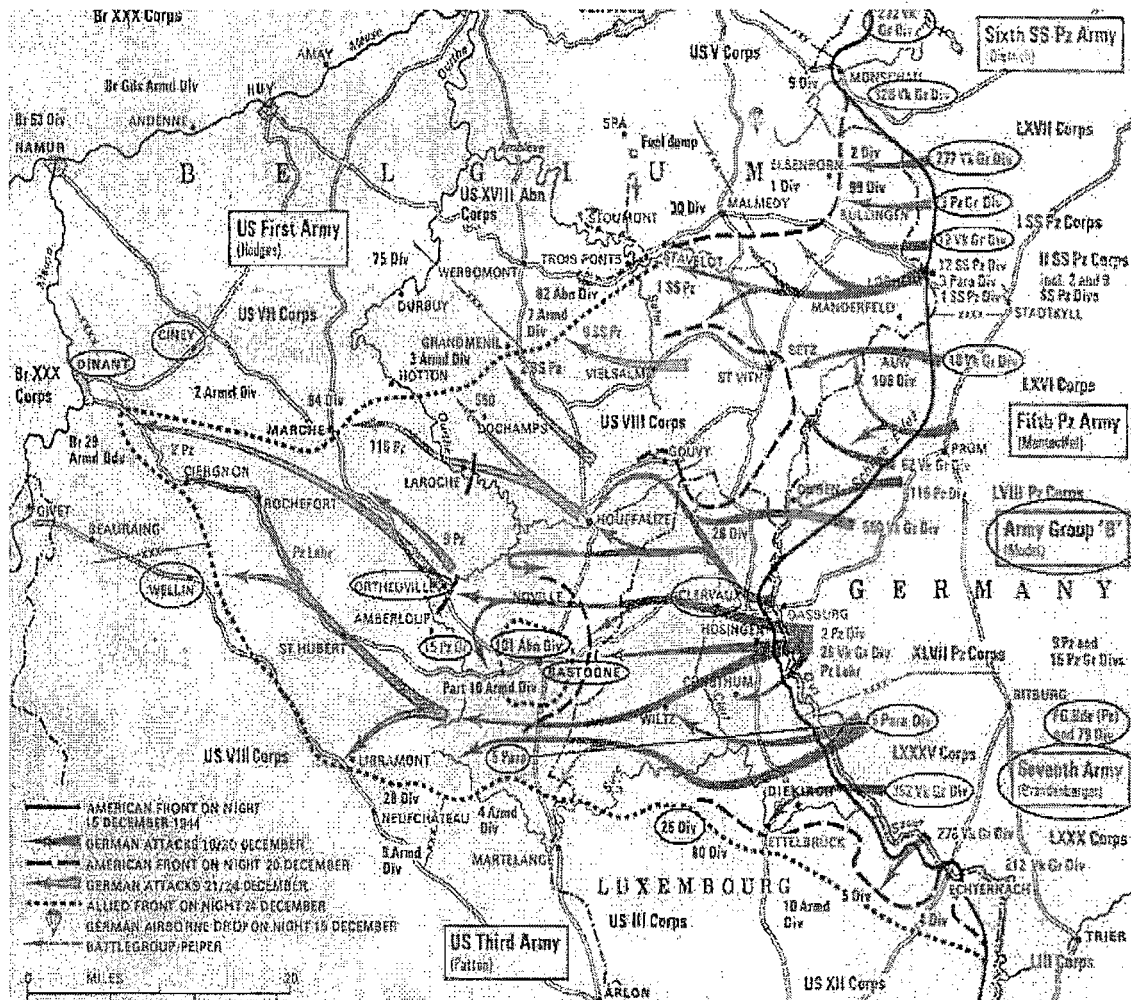


## Appendix 4.





## Appendix 5.



# Appendix 6.

